

【研究ノート】

Developing citizenship: lessons from British progressives, *Dramatic Method of Teaching* by H. Finlay-Johnson (1912)

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Abstract

In this article, I focus on the educational ideas of a pioneering work in order to abstract the meanings of ‘expression by children’ in the *Dramatic Method of Teaching* by H. Finlay-Johnson, which led school inspector E. G. Holmes to write his observations of her school children in his influential book. Why does drama have so potent an effect on children, a model of citizenship on human relationships as the progressives hoped? In answer to this question I would like to explore how language and facial expression are natural vehicles of thought for the child, how expressive competency becomes a key to maintaining good relationships with others and also its fundamental effect in generating well-being and peace.

Introduction

According to Boyd and Rawson (1965), “[T]he New Education rests upon three essential ideas: wholeness, creativity, and the unique value of the individual. If we consider the last two first, we can see that they imply a complete change in the pattern of human relationships”.¹ Progressive education, known as New Education during its evolution to the 1930s, has left both a tangible and intangible inheritance that required change in human relationships, between teachers and children, parents and children, and between peoples of the world.

In the context of the new era there were outstanding contributions from progressives, such members of (NEF², 1921-1966³, thereafter World Education Fellowship, WEF, 1966-), including E. G. Holmes, H. Finlay-Johnson, B. Ensor⁴, P. Nunn⁵, A. S. Neill⁶. Ensor and others wanted the NEF to form the international nucleus between many nations in order to keep international peace. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the World War I, Ensor argued that, “The principles underlying practically all these unrecorded experiments are those of self-development, self-government, and democracy in Education. And not these alone; but a wider understanding of religion as apart from sectarianism; a more true patriotism, which, giving love to the Motherland, yet is International in expression.”⁷

I will focus on the ‘Dramatic Method’⁸ a scheme of Headmistress of Finlay-Johnson which was admired by Holmes, a former Chief HMI (Her Majesty’s Inspector of schools)⁹. Her new method is a fascinating and radical idea as one of pioneering works in the new era. As a lesson from these histories, I will reflect on the role of progressive education, including its method,¹⁰ which had a significant impact beyond education, in encouraging the maintenance of international peace.¹¹

The Focus on *Dramatic Method* by E.G. Holmes, HMI

The headmistress of Sompting School in Sussex, later the author of *Dramatic Method of Teaching* (1912), was described by E. G. Holmes (1850-1936), former Chief HMI, in his book *What is and What might be: A*

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Study of Education in General and Elementary Education in Particular(1911). In the first part of the work he critiqued the indoctrination of children under the ‘payment by results’ system in the elementary school, which he argued as based on the ‘externalism of the West’.¹²

This book created a sensation in Japan when it was translated into Japanese, in two versions in 1913 and 1923.¹³ Holmes’ radical ideas stimulated Japanese school teachers at that time, which coincided with the *Taisho* Democratic Movement. (*Taisho* is the name of the Emperor at that time, and is used to distinguish events during his reign.)In Holmes’ book, Part Two is called “What might be, or the path of self-realisation”. It consisted of Chapter Four, “A school in Utopia”, Chapter Five, “Education through Self-realisation”, and Chapter Six, “Salvation through Self-realisation”. In those chapters Holmes introduced and described a headmistress *Egeria*¹⁴ and a school called *Utopia* based on Sompting School. In this section he offered a vision of an idealized education as an antidote to the account that he gave of his business as a HMI, where he had “painted in gloomy colours some of the actualities of elementary education”.¹⁵ Holmes states concerning her elementary school and her headship:

She has certainly been my *Egeria*, in the sense that whatever modicum of wisdom in matters educational I may happen to possess, I owe in large measure to her. I have paid her school many visits, and it has taken me many months of thought to get to what I believe to be the bed-rock of her philosophy of education, a philosophy which I will now attempt to expound. Two things will strike the stranger who pays his first visit to this school. One is the bright activity of the children. The other is the bright and happy look on every face.¹⁶

.....in this school every child is, as a rule, actively employed. And bearing in mind that “unimpeded energy” is a recognized source of happiness..... there is a close connection between the activity of the children and the brightness of their faces. That the latter feature of the school (is)..... of two kinds - the brightness of energy and intelligence, and the brightness of goodness and joy..... The Utopian child is alive, alert, active, full of latent energy, ready to act, to do things, to turn his mind to things, to turn his hand to things, to turn his desire to things, to turn his whole being to things.¹⁷

Holmes then described the education of the child in detail, stating that the training they received was based on the doctrine of original goodness in contrast with the widely held Christian doctrine of original sin, which suggested that mankind was doomed to war and strife because of the inherent evil embodied in human nature. Instead, the headmistress assumed that the child was neither a lump of clay nor a *tabula rasa*, ready passively to receive the impression of any sensation, in the manner of Locke’s empiricism, but was instead a “living soul” who was ready to play an active role in his or her own growth, if only allowed to do so. That is to say, under reasonably favourable conditions, the child will naturally grow to be happy and well developed.¹⁸

He also summarized the child’s nature, arguing that the child instinctively has six desires which are the “six formative and expansive instincts”, namely: *communicative instinct*, *dramatic instinct* (*Sympathetic Instincts*), *artistic instinct*, *musical instinct* (*Aesthetic Instincts*), *inquisitive instinct*, *constructive instinct* (*Scientific Instincts*).¹⁹ According to Holmes’ account of activity in the ideal school, the school life of the

child is all play²⁰ and the children enjoyed their play and learning in the Dramatic Method, which was the name given to integrated studies of school subjects which aimed at ‘individualisation and socialisation’ embedded in the ‘wholeness of the child’.

In 1912, *Egeria*, under her own name of Harriet Finlay-Johnson, offered a fuller account of her Dramatic Method, as described below.

Human relationship and expression: Meanings of *Dramatic Method of Teaching* (1912) ²¹

Dramatic Method of Teaching by Finlay-Johnson is the first description of progressive teaching methods in the history of progressive education in Britain. She described her progressive method in a few introductory words:

I taught my school children by the Dramatic Method..... I feel sure that all educationists worthy of the name will agree that at the present day, more than ever before, only the very best will be good enough for the education of our children.²²

The school in which my experiments were carried out was an English village school of about eighty-five elder scholars and forty-five infants – the latter treated as a “class” with my sister in charge. There, twelve years ago, I found myself in the position of head teacher; and it was then that I came to the conclusion that there was a great need of a radical change.²³

Finlay-Johnson started that radical change in the area of “nature study”. However, she did not want the dry and academic study of nature, where the children passively learned what had been prepared for them in a dry and academic way. She wanted to involve the children with nature as it can be observed directly and engaged with by the children in circumstances where they were free to move, free to interact with nature and above all free to wonder at nature. Nor did she want unnecessary external discipline to be applied to children, but thought that they should respond only to their own natural discipline.²⁴ Having evolved this method for nature study which was a response to the child’s own inquisitiveness, she then attempted to make the method the basis for all school subjects, not only nature study in the school garden. Nature rambles were to provide the subject matter for lessons in singing, reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, painting, recitation, composition, grammar, and much of the geography.²⁵

However, the presentation of history created a particular difficulty for this method, as nature study is essentially in the present, and focuses on the child’s curiosity about his or her immediate surroundings. History lacked this immediacy, and so Finlay-Johnson developed the parallel method of the historical play, in the belief that children learn and retain what they learn best when they are actually actively engaged in seeing things and doing things.²⁶

Therefore, in order to teach history, she had the children write their own historical plays, just as she had insisted that children make their own study of nature and not accept someone else’s work at second hand. Her argument was that children were more able to write plays that fitted their own development of thought and understanding than adults. Even if the dialogue and action looked crude to the adult observer, the child’s play was better able to capture what they could understand and learn.²⁷

Contrasting her method with the then common method of question and answer, a pseudo-child-centred method whereby the teacher leads the child through a dialogue which is determined by the teacher, she argues that in her Dramatic Method a pupil learnt to foster his or her originality, and develop the habit of self-expression. She recognised that language and facial expression are vehicles of thought for the child, and that by framing the questions in a particular way the teacher could pre-figure the answers that the child was expected to give, and in that way the originality and self-expression of the child could be circumscribed and possibly eventually extinguished.²⁸

Finlay-Johnson therefore wanted to base her understanding of what the children knew and appreciated on they had to say for them. This could not be achieved through lessons structured around question and answer sessions, where she was most likely to receive back only those of her own opinions that her pupils had grasped and recognised that she wanted. She wanted her pupils to speak freely to her, without preconceptions, or failing that to be able to listen to conversations between the pupils themselves when they were not trying to speak to and for adults. And finally she recognized that the thing that most endangered such open and frank dialogue was the fact that most children have grown used to the idea that, "Talking in school is against the rules!"²⁹ How did she teach? In her explanation "The four steps to original conversations and to an improved vocabulary were" as follows:

1. I first trained the children to *see* the world of Nature around them.
2. I encouraged them to *tell* me what they saw.
3. I showed them where to find their earliest impressions confirmed and crystallised, which was their introduction to good literature, with its (to them) new vocabulary.
4. I led them to look for "reasons why," by means of free discussions, and to imagine for themselves the gleam, "the light that never was, on land or sea."³⁰

Then she refers to the relationship between teachers and pupils.

Having thus brought my school to a condition in which the pupils had really lost and *forgotten the relationships of teacher and scholar*, by substituting those of fellow workers, friends, and playmates, I had now to set to work to use to full advantage this condition of affairs. It was now quite possible to play any game in school without fear of the pupils getting out of hand, confused, or too boisterous. There could be plenty of liberty without license, because the teacher, being a companion to and fellow worker with the pupils, had a strong moral hold on them and shared in the citizen's right of holding an opinion, being heard, therefore, not as "absolute monarch," but on the same grounds as the children themselves. Hence every one exerted his or her individual powers to make the plays a success... and it was the equal right of teacher or child to say, "So-and-so isn't playing the game", or in some other way to criticize the actions of others.³¹

In this way the development of nature study not only provided the subject matter for many lessons, it also modeled patterns of discipline, self-discipline and peaceful and harmonious co-existence, even democratic organization, which made it possible to extend the work into the area of historical drama.

Finlay-Johnson goes on to explain that her first efforts were based on historical novels for a number of reasons:

1. The children were already interested in reading them, and had formed fairly dramatic pictures of them in their own minds.
2. I desired that, at first, the children should act real characters rather than mythical or fairy creations. This did away with acting for display in the usual school entertainment way (style), which would have detracted considerably from the educational value, in that it would have fostered self-consciousness or nervousness.
3. The scholars (pupils) had already, with my co-operation, formed a school library for use during school hours, and this contained a sufficient number and variety of books out of which to extract material for the dialogues and arrangements of their plays. In these books they had already found many scenes dealing with real historical personages, which were easily adapted to the needs of school games and plays.³²

A great advantage of this new method of learning lessons by means of playing and acting them, lay in the fact that it was not absolutely necessary to have the lessons in one particular room; they could as easily, or more easily, be played in the open air. Frequently we acted our history plays on the downs, in overgrown chalk pits, or just in our own school playground.³³

Conclusion

Finlay-Johnson's Dramatic Method brings the children into closer relationship, awakens sympathy between pupils and teacher, and fosters class spirit. It gives forward children opportunities for leadership, and offers a natural outlet for spontaneity and enthusiasm. Ingenuity, individuality, and imagination are developed when the children make their own stage properties. So we are able to imagine that children in school master skills of self-expression and conversation without a teacher's authority through the play, and their expressive competency is a key to keep good relationships with others and maintaining a positive fundamental attitude to keep well-being and peace.

Despite the most common teaching methods at that time of the simultaneous class system, and a school curriculum controlled by central government centred on the 3R's, in the 1920s her radical teaching method played an influential role in subsequently encouraging many valuable progressive ideas: co-operative learning, open and frank dialogue, a wide curriculum with extra-curricular activities like school journeys, the out-door class, the open-air school, nature study as a core subject with cross-curricular dimensions, and so on, an understanding of the whole child and beginning from children's own perceptions. These progressive ideas enable us to classify two related categories for teachers' professional practice: making curriculum and understanding individual children as core professional skills, but also maintaining a stable and peaceful society through a fundamentally egalitarian relationship of mutual respect between children and teacher as most significant in developing citizenship.

According to a paper by Isabelle M. Pagan, 1921, "There are probably few schools now-a-days where some attempt at a dramatic representation of story, or ballad or fairytale is not attempted at least once a year,

even if only in the kindergarten department; but full of interest though these effort are, they have their difficulties; and sometimes the exhausted promoters, disheartened, maybe, by an out-break of measles or some similar catastrophe on the day of dress-rehearsal, feel inclined to say, “Never Again”³⁴. But the philosophy embedded in Dramatic Method becomes widely adopted. Pagan mentioned that “In these modern day when self-expression has become a catch-word, and our wisest educationalists are leaving more and more initiative in the hands of the children themselves, efforts have been made to encourage the creative faculty in the little folks by letting them write, as well as produce, their own plays; and a special point has sometimes been made of their concocting their own plots. As a matter of fact, children are so imitative that they practically never do so.”³⁵ Furthermore on the topic of ‘The Drama in Education’ in *The New Era* in 1923, Finlay-Johnson emphasized that “I experimented with the use of the dramatic instinct throughout the whole curriculum of the entire school”.³⁶ All people are equipped with this instinct and there is a fundamental reason to nurture expressive skills. The Dramatic Method is currently paid attention even in university teaching in Japan, recognized for its role in developing citizenship and helping to build a peaceful society. Especially because in the 21st century “the internet and other screen-based devices are rapidly changing the generation, nature and ownership of knowledge”³⁷ in our shift to the ‘virtual society’, the Dramatic Method with its fostering of direct expression is all the more important and potentially effective.

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- 1 W. Boyd and W. Rawson, *The Story of the New Education* (London: Heinemann, 1965), 191.
 - 2 Before WWII, Japanese progressives took part in the NEF’s International Conference, they introduced and disseminated progressive ideals to Japan through a new Japanese quarterly magazine *Kyoiku no Seiki* (1923-, *Century of Education*). Their attitudes were complicated, and depended upon the vagaries of a variety of conditions and paradoxical social contexts. However, despite such internationalist action on the part of educationists, Japan plunged into war.
 - 3 After the end of hostilities the United Nation (UN) purposing to maintain international peace and to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples was accomplished. NEF contributed to the founding of UNESCO, an “intellectual” agency of the UN.
 - 4 For Ensor’s new educational thoughts, see Y. Yamasaki, The Emergence of New Forms of Knowledge in Progressive Education; the Concept of Creativity in the Frensham Heights School (1925-), *Research Bulletin of Naruto University of Education*, 21(2006), 140-150. Also, Beatrice Ensor: The Value of her making for W.E.F, WEF, *The New Era in Education*, 77, no. 2 (1998), 44-47.
 - 5 For Nunn’s philosophy on Education, see followings: Y. Yamasaki, G. Foskett, The Aims of Education and Individual Life; Some reflections (1) on Education by T. Percy Nunn, *Research Bulletin of Mukogawa Women’s University*, 57(2010), 1-8. Individuality and Play in Education; Some reflections (2) on Education by T. Percy Nunn, *ibid*, 9-17. The Growth of the Self and the Role of the School in Developing Key Intelligences; Some Reflections(3) on Education by T. Percy Nunn, *Research Bulletin of Education Mukogawa Women’s University*, 5(2010), 1-14.
 - 6 For the thought of A. S. Neill, see Y. Yamasaki, *Niiru ‘shin kyoiku’ shiso no kenkyu (A Study of Neill’s ‘New Education’: A New Horizon of ‘Free School’ based on his Social Criticism)* (Tokyo: Ozora sha, 1996) (Japanese)
 - 7 B. Ensor, Outlook Tower, *Education for the New Era*, 1. no.1 (London, 1920), 4.
 - 8 In the almost same time H. Caldwell Cook of the Perse School for boys in Cambridge created the idea of play way. See *The play way; an essay in educational method* (Frederick A. Stokes company, Cambridge, 1917)
 - 9 Incidentally “dialogue-driven drama” of a nursery tale in the Performance Day in the school in Japan started around 1900s, and its promoters were O. Kawakami (1864-1911), an actor, and S. Iwaya (1870-1933), a novelist of juvenile literature. In 1919 they introduced the Drama in the school in Japan, called Gakko Geki (School Theatre) into Elementary School by K. Obara(1887-1977), a progressive educator and Christian, and built new progressive school called Tamagawa Gakuen(1929-) in Machida, Tokyo. Obara published *Gakko Geki Ron (Theory of School Theatre)* in 1913, and S. Tsubouchi called it Children’s drama ‘Jido Geki’ (juvenile drama) and published *Jido Kyoiku to Engeki (Children’s Education and Drama)* in 1923.
 - 10 For influences of progressive education from Britain into Japan, see Y. Yamasaki, The impact of Western progressive educational ideas in Japan: 1868–1940, *Journal of the History of Education Society*, 39, 5 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 575-588.
 - 11 For interaction of progressive ideas between Britain and Japan, see Y. Yamasaki, Continuing the conversation: British and Japanese

- progressivism, *Journal of the History of Education Society*, Special Issue: Festschrift for Roy Lowe, 42, 3 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 335-349.
- 12 E. G. Holmes, *What is and What might be* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd. 1911): v. See also R. Lowe, *The Death of Progressive Education* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 12-13. Japanese translation version, Y. Yamasaki & H. Soeda *et al* (Tokyo: Chisen Shokan, 2013), 22-24
 - 13 See Y. Yamasaki, A Study of Holmes' 'Self-realization' as 'New Ideals in Education', *Philosophy of Education Society of Japan, Study in the Philosophy of Education*, 81(2000), 92-111.(Japanese)
 - 14 Egeria is a nymph or minor goddess of the Roman religious system of unclear origin. Described sometime as a "mountain nymph" (Plutarch), she is usually regarded as a water nymph and somehow her cult also involved some link with childbirth, like the Greek goddess Ilithyia. But most of all, Egeria gave wisdom and prophecy in return for libations of water or milk at her sacred groves.
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egeria_\(mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egeria_(mythology)) (Accessed 02 Jun. 2014)
 - 15 E. G. Holmes, op. cit. (1911): 153.
Ibid., 154.
 - 17 Ibid., 155.
 - 18 Ibid., 162-163.
 - 19 Ibid., 165-194.
 - 20 Ibid., 170.
 - 21 There are organised by I. Introduction, II. The Teaching of History by Plays, III. The Adapted Play, IV. The Original Play, V. The Shakespearean Play, VI. A Girls' Play, VII. Literature, VIII. Geography, IX. Arithmetic and Composition, X. Nature Study newly approached, XI. Manual Work, XII. After School Age.
 - 22 H. Finlay-Johnson, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (London: James Nisbet & Co., Limited, 1912),15. See also H. Finlay-Johnson, Ellen M. Cyr, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (Kessinger Legacy Reprints, a first edition 1912, Ginn and Company)
 - 23 Ibid., 15-16.
 - 24 Ibid.,16.
 - 25 Ibid.,16, 19.
 - 26 Ibid., 19.
 - 27 Ibid.
 - 28 Ibid., 20.
 - 29 Ibid., 20-21.
 - 30 Ibid., 21.
 - 31 Ibid., 22.
 - 32 Ibid., 25-26.
 - 33 Ibid., 26.
 - 34 I. M. Pagan, The Value of the Drama in Education, NEF, *The New Era*, 2, no. 8 (1921), 234.
 - 35 Ibid., 235.
 - 36 Harriet Finlay-Johnson, Drama in Education, NEF, *The New Era*, 4, no.13 (1923), 134.
 - 37 R. Aldrich, Nature, nurture and neuroscience: some future directions for historians of education, *Paedagogica Historica* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 1.